

DIFFERENCES IN DEVELOPMENT OF ADAPTIVE BEHAVIORAL SKILLS AMONG MENTALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN WITH THEIR BIRTH ORDER

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ABSTRACT

The present study assessed and compared the adaptive skills of 150 mentally challenged children from 3 RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognised special schools of Delhi across their birth order. Sample was drawn randomly in equal proportions from mild, moderate and severe mental challenge, belonged to low and middle income families. The adaptive skills were assessed using Behavioural Assessment Scales for Indian Children with Mental Retardation Part A developed by NIMH. Findings revealed that third or above born children had more adaptivity when compared to first born. The predominant reason was more support and guidance of their elder siblings. Therefore, from the study it can be concluded that for sure birth order had great impact over the adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children.

KEYWORDS: Domestic Social Skills, Mental Disability, Mental Retardation, Ordinal Position & Reading Writing Skills

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most common disorders that changes children's entire life and make them special is mental retardation/challenge. An individual with mental challenge has certain limitations in mental abilities and in skills such as communication, daily care activities and social skills. Due to these limitations, a child learns and develops more slowly than a normal child. The performance and behavior of a normal individual or even a mentally retarded individual is not only dependent on his or her cognitive abilities, but many other factors are also responsible like emotional maturity, education, social and cultural environment. The diagnosis of mental retardation mainly requires low general intellectual functions and age of onset before the age of 18 (Accordo and Capute, 1998). In addition, deficits in adaptive behavior can also be added in the traditional definition of mental retardation.

The adaptive behaviours are the everyday living skills, such as eating, talking, walking, cleaning, getting dressed, going to school, going to work, preparing a meal and so on. It is the functional ability that an individual uses in order to acquire personal independence and social responsibility. A person learns these skills in the process of adapting to his or her surroundings.

Bandura's social learning theory gives evidence that people acquire a wide range of behaviours, feelings and thoughts by observing others behaviour that plays an important role in lifelong learning. So, in spite of mental limitations, children observe and imitate their family members and more so siblings (Upreti and Singh, 2015). Siblings are the models. Children often copy their siblings' actions—especially older siblings. Relationships with siblings are the longest-lasting in most people's lives (Antonucci et al. 2001). However, it is in general considered

that psychological development of an individual is affected by the birth order of a child.

Birth order refers to the order a child is born with, for example first born, second born and so on. When researchers asked siblings about shared daily activities, children mentioned that older siblings often helped younger siblings with academic and peer challenges (Tucker et al. 2001). Moreover, individuals occupying youngest position in family have been found to be more secure, yet dependent. In this regard, Nims in 1998 reported that youngest children are believed to be accustomed to receiving attention and thought to misbehave if they feel a lack of attention. In another study it was revealed that although many genetic and environmental factors contribute to differences between siblings, some differences in behaviour of siblings have been attributed to the effects of birth order (Claxton, 1994), an individual's rank by age among siblings (Steelman, 1985 in Claxton, 1994). Thus, by keeping this discussion in mind it can be stated that birth order affects the personality, thinking and the development of children. However, the impact of child's birth order on the adaptive behavioural skills of mentally challenged children is still not completely revealed. Therefore, in the light of the above reflections, the present study was planned with these objectives.

- To assess and compare the level of adaptive behavioural skills among mentally challenged children across their birth order.
- To investigate statistical differences in the adaptive behavioural skills of mentally challenged children across their birth order.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Location

The present study was conducted in national capital, Delhi. Delhi was purposively selected as a locale for the present study as it is one of the nearest regions that has appropriate number of RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools meant exclusively for mentally challenged children.

2.2 Sample

A multistage purposive cum random sampling technique were used to select the sample. Out of the nine RCI recognized institutes, three institutes namely NIMH (National Institute for Mentally Handicapped), Manovikas and C.B.S Memorial were randomly selected as research base. Since, the population of mentally challenged children from high income group (HIG) was extensively low, therefore, only those belonging to low income group (LIG) and middle income group (MIG) were included in the study. Out of the total population of LIG and MIG mentally challenged children, 75 mentally challenged children were selected from each social class by randomly drawing 25 from each level of mental challenge. Therefore, sample for the present study comprised of 150 mentally challenged children and their families.

2.3 Procedure

The Directors of the selected institutions were contacted. All the necessary details pertaining to the enrolled MR children and their families were procured from the directors. The required samples were drawn and then, first common meeting was organized with the families of MR children. Assurance was given to the families that the information provided by them will be kept confidential and utilized only for the research purpose. After that, the parents were interviewed and observations made by the researcher.

2.4 Measures

Self-designed general questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents. Adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children were assessed by employing “Behavioural Assessment Scales for Indian Children with Mental Retardation” (BASIC-MR) Part A (Peshawaria and Venkatesan, 1992) developed at NIMH.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data collected was classified and tabulated as per the objectives. Analysis was done by taking levels of mental challenge as control. The data was analyzed using statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, mean and one way ANOVA.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents frequency and percentage distribution of mentally challenged children on adaptive behaviour skills across birth order. Inconsistent results were obtained, on motor skills component, more percentage of 3rd or above born mildly challenged children (66.67%) were identified as highly adaptive. Whereas, moderately challenged children who were first born (47.62%) and severely challenged children who were 2nd born (40.00%) were more in proportion at high level of motor skills.

Under the component activities of daily living majority of mildly and moderately challenged children who were 1st born (73.33% and 76.19%) were found to be more in percentage at high level. However, more proportion of 2nd born severely challenged children (46.67%) was at high level of adaptivity.

Since, most of the children were low in language adaptivity, so when frequency and percentage calculated it was found that mildly and moderately challenged children who were 1st and 2nd born (70.00% and 77.78%) showed more proportion at low level. While, all 1st and 2nd born severely challenged children were found to have low adaptivity.

In the reading writing component majority of 1st born children (90.00%) showed low adaptivity. Among moderately challenged children who were 3rd or above born reported low level of adaptivity and were comparatively less in proportion (81.82%), and in severe category of mental challenge all the children were found at low level of adaptivity, hence no difference across birth order was found.

Number time component revealed that more proportion of mildly and moderately challenged children who were 2nd born (88.24% and 90.48%) reported low adaptivity. While no difference across birth order was seen among severely challenged children.

A cursory look at the domestic social component depicts that majority of mildly challenged children who were 1st born (86.67%) reported low adaptivity and among moderately challenged children almost same proportion of 1st and 2nd born (95.24% and 94.44%) were found and their proportion were more as compared to 3rd or above born (72.73%). However, no difference among severely challenged children across birth order was seen, all the mentally challenged children reported low adaptivity in domestic social skills.

On the other hand, it was found that almost all the children showed low level of adaptivity in pre vocational money component.

Analysis on the adaptive behaviour skills across birth order of mentally challenged children revealed that third or above born children reported better motor skills, daily living activities; also identified better in language, reading-writing, number-time, domestic social and prevocational money adaptivity when compared to the first born children. A child often feels comfortable and enjoys company of brother or sister they having and attached to them intensely. Seibert and Kerns (2009) in this regard concluded that throughout childhood, children continue to treat older siblings as attachment figures, turning to them for comfort in stressful situations when parents are unavailable.

Ordinal position of three or more leads to more support, attention and guidance of elder brother or sister. In this context, Nims, 1998 reported that youngest children are believed to be accustomed to receiving attention and thought to misbehave if they feel a lack of attention. Likewise, in families of mentally challenged children, presence of elder brother or sister made the special need child more adaptive and their support and guidance proved to be helpful in acquiring motor skills, doing activities of daily living, in language development, in academics and in improving their social behaviour.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from the present study that for sure birth order has great impact over the adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children. Children irrespective of their degree of mental challenge, who were 3rd or above born were seen to be significantly more adaptive in motor skills, activities of daily living, and prevocational money domains; had better language, reading-writing, number-time and domestic social adaptivity. Children with 3rd or above born ordinal position receive a caring, loving and pampering environment at home; their each and every activity is under the vigilance of elder brother or sister. Therefore, on the whole it can be concluded that having birth order of 3 or more leads to better adaptivity of skills among special need children when compared with the first born children. Although third and above born child receives more attention, care and vigilance from older siblings and other family members but it doesn't mean that if mentally challenged child is oldest one then he/she should be deprived or will not be provided with any kind of support from other siblings. So, sibling relationship should be strengthen to build a strong natural bond between special need child and his/her siblings. Emphasis should be given on establishing good peer group among siblings, building more relationships, providing more social support and in increasing socialization among mentally challenged children that will provide more support, attention, guidance and proper vigilance to the special need children and also promote their inclusion in society.

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APPENDICES

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Mentally Challenged Children on the Type & Level of Adaptive Behaviour Skills across their Birth Order

Domains of Adaptive Behaviour Skills	Levels of Adaptive Behaviour Skills	Mildly Challenged Children (n ₁ =50)						Moderately Challenged Children (n ₂ =50)						Severely Challenged Children (n ₃ =50)					
		1st Born (n _{1a} =30)		2 nd Born (n _{1b} =17)		3 rd or above Born (n _{1c} =3)		1st Born (n _{2a} =21)		2 nd Born (n _{2b} =18)		3 rd or above Born (n _{2c} =11)		1st Born (n _{3a} =27)		2 nd Born (n _{3b} =15)		3 rd or above Born (n _{3c} =8)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Motor	Low	4	13.33	4	23.53	0	0.00	1	4.76	3	16.67	2	18.18	10	37.04	0	0.00	6	75.00
	Moderate	9	30.00	6	35.29	1	33.33	10	47.62	12	66.67	7	63.64	14	51.85	9	60.00	2	25.00
	High	17	56.67	7	41.18	2	66.67	10	47.62	3	16.67	2	18.18	3	11.11	6	40.00	0	0.00
Activities of Daily Living	Low	8	26.67	11	64.71	0	0.00	1	4.76	12	66.67	9	81.82	23	85.19	8	53.33	4	50.00
	Moderate	0	0.00	3	17.65	2	66.67	4	19.05	4	22.22	2	18.18	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	50.00
	High	22	73.33	3	17.65	1	33.33	16	76.19	2	11.11	0	0.00	4	14.81	7	46.67	0	0.00
Language	Low	21	70.00	8	47.06	0	0.00	9	42.86	14	77.78	10	90.91	27	100.0	15	100.0	4	50.00
	Moderate	7	23.33	8	47.06	2	66.67	12	57.14	4	22.22	1	9.09	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	50.00
	High	2	6.67	1	5.88	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Reading-Writing	Low	27	90.00	14	82.35	0	0.00	21	100.0	18	100.0	9	81.82	27	100.0	15	100.0	8	100.0
	Moderate	2	6.67	2	11.76	2	66.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	18.18	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	1	3.33	1	5.88	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Number-Time	Low	25	83.33	15	88.24	1	33.33	19	90.48	17	94.44	9	81.82	27	100.0	15	100.0	8	100.0
	Moderate	5	16.67	2	11.76	2	66.67	2	9.52	1	5.56	2	18.18	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Domestic Social	Low	26	86.67	14	82.35	0	0.00	20	95.24	17	94.44	8	72.73	27	100.0	15	100.0	8	100.0
	Moderate	4	13.33	3	17.65	2	66.67	1	4.76	1	5.56	3	27.27	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Pre Vocational Money	Low	30	100.0	16	94.12	1	33.33	21	100.0	18	100.0	11	100.0	27	100.0	15	100.0	8	100.0
	Moderate	0	0.00	1	5.88	2	66.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

Table 2: Mean Differences in the Adaptive Behaviour Skills of Mentally Challenged Children across their Birth Order

Domains of Adaptive Behaviour Skills	Mildly Challenged Children (n ₁ =50)			Moderately Challenged Children (n ₂ =50)			Severely Challenged Children (n ₃ =50)		
	1st Born (n _{1a} =30)	2 nd Born (n _{1b} =17)	3 rd or above Born (n _{1c} =3)	1st Born (n _{2a} =21)	2 nd Born (n _{2b} =18)	3 rd or above Born (n _{2c} =11)	1st Born (n _{3a} =27)	2 nd Born (n _{3b} =15)	3 rd or above Born (n _{3c} =8)
Motor	121.44 ^a	123.58 ^{ab}	125.17 ^b	116.23 ^a	117.34 ^{ab}	120.58 ^b	75.23 ^a	76.34 ^{ab}	79.46 ^b
Activities of Daily Living	106.70 ^a	108.55 ^{ab}	110.18 ^b	98.67 ^a	99.24 ^{ab}	101.26 ^b	61.23 ^a	63.21 ^{ab}	64.36 ^b
Language	56.89 ^a	58.39 ^{ab}	60.56 ^b	55.16 ^a	56.38 ^{ab}	58.64 ^b	26.14 ^a	27.23 ^{ab}	28.44 ^b
Reading-Writing	27.88 ^a	28.56 ^{ab}	31.69 ^b	7.22 ^a	8.10 ^{ab}	9.66 ^b	3.38 ^a	4.04 ^{ab}	5.44 ^b
Number-Time	19.35 ^a	20.48 ^{ab}	22.39 ^b	6.45 ^a	7.12 ^{ab}	8.66 ^b	1.98 ^a	2.91 ^{ab}	3.88 ^b
Domestic Social	37.66 ^a	39.44 ^{ab}	41.48 ^b	36.91 ^a	38.18 ^{ab}	39.05 ^b	16.22 ^a	17.56 ^{ab}	18.32 ^b
Pre Vocational Money	23.33 ^a	24.28 ^{ab}	25.38 ^b	16.23 ^a	17.89 ^{ab}	18.67 ^b	6.78 ^a	7.11 ^{ab}	8.39 ^b

Note: 1. Means with different superscripts differ significantly at p<0.05

2. Higher the score, higher the adaptive behavior

